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The New Orleans Female Orphan Society: Labor, Education, and Americanization, 1817-1833

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
University of New Orleans
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts
in
History

By

Mark Duvall

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Abstract

In the first few decades of the nineteenth century, Americans and immigrants moved to New Orleans hoping to take advantage of the opportunities the city offered. Many American citizens moved from cities like Boston, New York, and Philadelphia. Recognizing the lack of social welfare programs and assistance given to the poor, a group of women established the Female Orphan Society. From its creation, the Female Orphan Society worked in providing aid to indigent mothers and their children through providing religious, vocational, and educational training. In a short time, the FOS emerged as the only private, Protestant female refuge for immigrant families and their children in New Orleans. This involvement elevated the role of the asylum in the city and heightened the influence of an institution run by southern, upper-class white women.

Keywords: Female Orphan Society (FOS), Poydras Asylum, and New Orleans

Introduction

On June 5, 1819, the Female Orphan Society received a letter from a man in Havana requesting the institution send his eight-year-old daughter to the island nation. The society immediately responded. “Informing him of the late laws passed by the legislature of Louisiana prohibiting the removal of any children without the approbation of the directresses, except a remuneration for the maintenance of such child should be made to the society,” the board established the compensation at one hundred dollars per annum.¹ Four months later the father granted power of attorney to a friend who quickly received the girl and paid the “sum demanded for her maintenance.”² The story of this young girl, however, begins two years earlier when she entered the asylum. Admitted on March 15, 1817, she was the eighth girl accepted within the orphanage walls. Learning that she had an “indigent mother” and a father in Cuba who had deserted his family, the asylum placed the young girl out to “learn the manufacturing business,” during which time her mother died.³ In two short years, the story of the young Havana girl reveals not only the adversity that destitute families experienced in New Orleans but also the recognized position the Female Orphan Society had established within the political and social polities of New Orleans society.

The Havana father’s demand for the release of his daughter illustrates the many forces that shaped the early existence of the Female Orphan Society (FOS). Through establishing the first Protestant female asylum in Louisiana, the FOS attempted to support indigent families by housing destitute and orphaned girls, particularly immigrant children. Indigent families soon recognized the home’s importance in educating young girls, while also temporarily relieving parents of the hardship of raising children under dire circumstances. The story also indicates the

broad legal powers the FOS exercised in the city. Securing an act of incorporation expanded the FOS's role, elevating their involvement in politics, local churches, and the elite social networks of the city. Upon an inmate's admittance, the association entered into contracts that bound the children to the institution. With a legal hold over the inmates, the society received complete protection under Louisiana law in custody issues. The anecdote further illustrates the role of children's labor in the Americanization of the city. Similar to many of the inhabitants of the asylum, the FOS placed the young Havana girl was placed out to gain experience in industry and manufacturing. Adding to the labor of the growing commercial city, the FOS gained profit and legal recognition, while also providing a service to the many merchants, manufacturers, and industrious Anglo-Americans moving to the city.

Demonstrating the motives and goals behind the founding of the society, the FOS adopted both a constitution and a system of rules and regulations that governed both the benevolent association and asylum. An elected board of managers was responsible for “[providing] a house for the reception of indigent Female Orphans and Widows,” and for appropriating “their money and goods principally to the use of [the] establishment.”⁴ Accepting “any female child, in want,” the board appointed a committee “to seek out and examine into the circumstances and claims of indigent Orphans and Widows.”⁵ The board also had the power to accept or reject the reported person by a majority of votes. Created to “instruct the children in good morals and behavior; in all such knowledge as shall tend to make them useful members of society- in all useful Labor and the remnants of science,” the board hired a governess to preside over the institution. It was the governess’ duty “to ascertain as far as possible, the abilities and disposition of each individual under her charge, and to allot to her such employment and duties as best appertain to [her.]”⁶ In January 1817, the society adopted its constitution, and after receiving an article of incorporation in February, it established the Poydras Asylum, making it the first private, Protestant refuge run by women and exclusively for girls in the antebellum South.

The establishment of this unprecedented welfare institution in New Orleans raises several questions. How did the asylum, managed by women from the North and the South, meet the challenges of running a private institution in a city deeply rooted in Catholicism and two centuries of colonial rule? How was the need for a female refuge related to the demographic changes in New Orleans, particularly as the swelling immigrant population struggled to adjust to a city moving closer to becoming a slave society? How did indigent families of New Orleans, predominately orphans and daughters of impoverished widows, officiate the role of the asylum in

their own lives? And finally, how did the nine female managers in the FOS reconcile their self-appointed public roles with prevailing notions of female domesticity that restricted their access to the public domain?

As the first private, female Protestant asylum in Louisiana, the FOS became a vanguard of charitable work. Whereas merchants, lawyers, and businessmen saw in New Orleans opportunities for political and economic advancement, the women of the FOS, under the auspices of public benevolence, saw opportunities for reform; namely, by aiding the growing, destitute immigrant population. State and city representatives soon depended on the institution, a society largely administered by upper-class white American Protestant women, to assist indigent families and orphans. The dependence, however, allowed the FOS managers to cast aside their traditional domestic roles and become a recognized polity actively involved in the social, religious, and political domains of the city. Through assisting impoverished immigrant widows and orphans, indenturing children and their labor in the service of the increasingly Americanized economy, and creating an institution that the immigrant population employed as a means for survival and educational training, the FOS became instrumental in the complex process of Americanizing New Orleans.

In the first few decades of the nineteenth century, the inadequacy of charitable assistance and the shortcomings of public education in New Orleans fostered an environment that forced indigent families to rely on handouts or go before the city council to beg for assistance. Education and civic benevolence for the poor were almost non-existent. In the three years from May 7, 1814, to May 3, 1817, the city council handed out a derisory sum of \$877.50 to widows and families in need.⁷ The framers of Louisiana's first state constitution chose not to implement public education in the state. Two centuries of foreign rule were largely to blame for the

dilapidated welfare policies administered in New Orleans. For the most part, France and Spain ignored their American colonies, deciding to allocate their money and attention to the sugar-producing islands of the West Indies. The local Creole population was rather complacent in issues related to public welfare as well; most were illiterate and almost always “politically naïve, genuinely uninterested in intellectual or artistic concerns,” according to historian Joseph Tregle.⁸ Mary Anne Hunter, secretary of the FOS, remarked in a letter to her cousin on the Creoles’ unwillingness to support education- even stating that “reading is not fashionable in New Orleans.” As a result, Louisiana failed in moving beyond anything that resembled a rudimentary and backwater colony; the city was no exception.

Throughout the South, there were little or no institutional public welfare systems that supported indigent children. The few public orphanages that existed, such as the Charleston Orphan House, barely surpassed the living conditions of other poor white urban children.⁹ Founded in 1790 as the nation’s first public orphanage, the asylum required parents to surrender legal guardianship. Soon after, the children entered into indentured contracts upon admittance. Private asylums virtually became the only recourse for destitute families in the first half of the nineteenth century, especially in New Orleans.

Along with the lack of public education, the wretched New Orleans environment further added to the plight of destitute families. One citizen wrote to the *Louisiana Gazette* in June 1815 stating the “accumulated filth in this city exceeds anything of the kind exhibited in any city under the United States government.”¹⁰ Poor immigrants, especially, were most affected, as the crowded and unsanitary tenements they lived in became hotbeds for disease. In August 1820, Mayor Louis Phillipe Roffignac of New Orleans described Charity Hospital as a “breeding center of contagious diseases full of unfortunate persons..., mostly among the persons recently

arrived in our country and consequently more exposed to the injurious effects of a destructive climate.”¹¹ According to Dr. Edward H. Barton, co-author of the Sanitary Commission Report of 1853, stated, “New Orleans is one of the dirtiest... and sickliest [cities] in the Union.”¹² He estimated the average mortality rate was 59.63 persons per 1,000 between the years 1787-1853, “more than double what it would have been, had proper sanitary measures been adopted and efficiently enforced.”¹³ For many, even for the natives who had lived within the city for decades, New Orleans was a challenging place to live.

Recognizing the urgent need for public assistance and education for poor children, the FOS filled a gap left by state oversight. In the *First Annual Report January 1818*, the secretary writes, “Where in absolute want they sought a cause for this misery and traced it, in many cases, to improper education.”¹⁴ An editorial in the *Louisiana Gazette* of August 1815 presented a more hopeful assessment, but still acknowledged the city’s problems. The editorial asserted that “our city is rapidly progressing in every respect and although she is still deficient in some institutions, I nevertheless predict... she will be ranked as the first in commerce, richness, and population of North America.”¹⁵ Though very different in tone, both provide an indication of the insufficiency in public assistance that surrounded the city.

Although much of the South largely prescribed domestic roles to all women, including those of the upper-class, the founders of the FOS carved their own identity outside of the domestic household. In February 1817, on motion from Nathan Morse, the New Orleans city council adopted the following resolution: “Whereas the city council of New Orleans sees with the greatest pleasure the efforts of the women of this city, to establish an Association intended to help the needy orphan girls; resolved... to help them in this act of charity and to attain the realization of their ambitions in this respect.”¹⁶ The resolution heightened the urgent need for an

orphanage to house poor children. The immigrant population had increased each year and the scarcity of public assistance afforded to the citizens demanded action. On February 22, 1817, the Louisiana State Legislature granted the FOS an article of incorporation, officially recognizing the institution. It granted the FOS the ability to sue, defend, plead, or be sued “in all courts of law or equity and are hereby made capable and able in law to have, purchase, receive, take hold, profit, enjoy, and retain to them and their successors, lands, tenements, stocks, goods, and chattels.”¹⁷ An act of incorporation allowed the FOS to gain new legal rights in New Orleans society, powers that single women lacked in their own lives.¹⁸ With these new collective privileges, the FOS gained access to political favor and economic advancement.

Six girls between five and ten years of age were the first admitted. Phoebe Hunter, a local woman active in charitable endeavors, was the driving force behind this early effort to accommodate the orphans. The FOS placed the six girls in temporary housing within “Sycamore Grove,” an area near the Hunter home located upriver from the city. Soon after, Julian Poydras, a wealthy and prominent New Orleans businessman, philanthropist, and legislator, donated his old plantation home on the corner of St. Charles Avenue and Julia Street; on March 10, 1817, the home officially opened to the public under the name of the Poydras Asylum, as two superior directors oversaw the management of the entire institution.

Because immigration to the city increased each year, the Poydras Home emerged as a safe refuge for impoverished families recently arrived. According to the FOS the “unhappy sufferers” of the city were “generally fugitives from the islands of St. Domingue and Cuba.”¹⁹ From February 1817 to December 1822, fifty-eight children passed through the institution, with fifty-three remaining in the institution at the end of 1822. In the register of the Poydras Asylum, twenty-seven of the fifty-three were clearly marked as immigrant children; fourteen are indicated

as being German-the largest representation of any foreign country. Although the register fails to provide the place of birth for some of the admitted, with last names such as Beyan, Navedo, St. Aimeo, Deville, Lautestal, Rostenmayer, and Placencia, one could surmise that immigrant children represented a greater percentage of the inhabitants than reported.²⁰

Immigrants moved to New Orleans for various reasons. In the first decade of the nineteenth century, the New Orleans population hovered around 17,000; separated into three categories, the city consisted of 6,311 whites, 2,312 free persons of color, and 8,378 slaves. By the end of 1810, the population nearly doubled due to the massive influx of Cuban and Saint Domingue refugees. From 1809-1810, 2,371 whites, 3,102 free people of color and 3, 226 slaves left the Caribbean islands searching for a safe refuge in Louisiana.²¹ The recent immigration of French people from the Caribbean islands resulted from Napoleon's invasion of Spain and the slave rebellion on St. Domingue. Following the rebellion, French peoples left the island for Cuba and a short time later, due to Napoleon's conquests, Cuba and Saint Domingue expelled all people who did not have a Spanish spouse or an inclination to become a Spanish citizen. The arrival of such a vast number of immigrants caused fear among many of the locals because of the potential diseases the refugees carried with them. Nevertheless, the majority of New Orleans citizens welcomed the French speakers once they became situated. Both whites and Creoles on the islands had received some form of education and brought with them experience in skilled labor. Historian Nathalie Dessens argues that "Louisiana was sufficiently close to what the refugees had left behind to give them a sense of familiarity but presented enough difference to offer them space for insertion and influence."²² Later in the antebellum period, many of the refugees would side with the Creole population as the conflict between the locals and recently arrived Anglo-Americans escalated.

Whereas the majority of the French people immigrated to the city because of the revolution in Haiti, Anglo Americans moved to New Orleans searching to benefit from a economic system that would favor them locally and nationally. According to historian Joseph Tregle, Anglo Americans recognized the opportunities the city offered, “[seeking] their fortunes in the rich acres of the new territory and in its markets, banks, courts, and thriving trading centers.”²³ Compared to the Latin Creoles, the Americans knew what they desired and were better equipped to achieve prosperity than the locals. “Better educated, more sophisticated politically, economically, and even culturally,” elite Americans looked to consolidate a polity that was not possible under the territorial government.²⁴ Further, according to Peter Castor, American officials at all levels committed to excluding both the Creoles and French speaking peoples, believing that ostracizing outsiders “could only promote incorporation” within the American nation.²⁵ A struggle soon ensued over citizenship and nationhood between the Anglo and Creole populations, the latter backed by French speaking peoples from Cuba and Saint Domingue.

The founders of the FOS consisted of the elite, Anglo American families recently arrived to the city who were attempting to take advantage of the opportunities the city presented. The Hunter, Morse, Bryant, and Hennen families moved to New Orleans from the northern cities of Baltimore, Philadelphia, and New York within the second decade of the nineteenth century. Quickly establishing themselves in the elite hierarchies of New Orleans society, the women founded the FOS and served as the first board members, while their husbands emerged as wealthy businessmen, lawyers, and politicians in the expanding American section of the city.²⁶ In the North, the idealism of the “cult of domesticity” and Protestant evangelicalism encouraged civic-minded women to serve the poor through benevolence and charitable works. Following the

American revolution, the status of poor women continued to decline; destitute, urban women were seen as dependents and therefore, could never exercise the republican virtues promised by the revolution.²⁷ Women's assumed passionate nature discredited authority over their own bodies, especially laboring women, which further demarcated their position in society. The increase of cheap labor, along with the growth of manufacturing in urban cities, dramatically altered roles in poor families. As family life deteriorated for urban families, women kept the "tenement classes" functioning.²⁸ The household and outside world converged as poor women cleaned the house, gathered wood and food, and attempted to provide the necessities for the family, often times without a father or husband. In New York after 1815, benevolent societies sought to prevent the poor from yielding in the vices they believed caused poverty-hasty marriages, ignorance, idleness, and intemperance. The first organizations sought to create "self producing and independent persons," as the leaders of the FOS would in two years.²⁹

Anglo Americans from the Northeast had considerable difficulty adjusting to the social and cultural environment of New Orleans. In 1815, Mary Ann Hunter, secretary of the FOS, wrote a letter to her cousin Eliza complaining that the phrase, "in the states," used in the "language of the people" was "very grating to [her] ear."³⁰ Another northerner wrote an editorial to the *Louisiana Gazette* complaining that "good sense and good order are kicked out to make way for turmoil and disorder."³¹ Little could be done to prepare northern families for the ominous environment they would experience. The largest group of local people, the Latin Creoles, favored a life full of "sensation" that encompassed enjoying balls, gambling, and socializing.³² Shocked at the locals' desire to spend the Sabbath leisurely entertaining friends and family, the newcomers resolved to reform the wayward population of New Orleans.

The FOS seized the opportunities available in New Orleans for the increased Anglo American population. Throughout America, women's organizations had formed under the influence of the Second Great Awakening and cult of domesticity taking root in mainly white, middle- and upper-class families. Charity and benevolent associations emerged as an avenue for women to gain entrance into the public sphere. Many organizations "sought first to alleviate spiritual want, then to deal with temporal deprivation."³³ The founding of the earliest benevolent societies often reflected religious motivation but as more associations came into existence, many moved toward meeting personal and public needs.³⁴ The FOS primarily worked to assist their inmates in becoming self-sufficient members of society. Prior to receiving an article of incorporation, the society wrote, "Charity is never so well bestowed when it is employed in qualifying its objects to live independent of its bounty."³⁵ Believing the FOS "should serve the cause of humanity more effectually," the managers early motivating factor was benevolence, but in a short time, preparing the inhabitants to become "productive members of society" became the primary focus.

The city of New Orleans quickly recognized the gap the FOS filled in providing education and a home for indigent and orphaned children. Three months after the FOS received incorporation within Louisiana, the City Council of New Orleans sent a letter on May 12, 1817 expressing "sincere pleasure and admiration... for the relief, maintenance, and education of female orphan children." They were also "deeply impressed with the necessity of encouraging and carrying into full effect the meritorious objects of said institution."³⁶ With increased population, particularly the influx of foreigners outside the United States, New Orleans council members recognized the vital importance of the FOS. Because both the state and city failed to provide sustainable means of public support to indigent citizens, the city council began

supporting the FOS through various avenues. Through either direct monetary assistance or political backing, council members assured the FOS of their “willingness to relieve the distressed, as far as the means in their power will enable them.”³⁷ The early relationship between the institutions soon fostered a growing dependence on the asylum. The Mayor’s office continued to support the FOS throughout the next few decades.

The *Third Annual Report January 17, 1820* indicated the prevailing presence of immigrants within New Orleans during the FOS first few years of existence. The report stated the FOS, along with the “many useful charities which have existence..., level all distinctions of country and unite the unfortunate native and unfriended foreigner in one common home.”³⁸ In the *Eighth Annual Report January 29, 1825*, the managers found it “pleasing...that many of the young and helpless orphans find within the sheltering walls of the Asylum, a home where every comfort is provided.”³⁹ The sentiments expressed in the reports indicated both the strong presence of indigent immigrants in New Orleans and the society’s desire to unite the inhabitants together under one roof. From 1817-1832, children from Germany, France, Cuba, Saint Domingue, Spain, Ireland, Mexico, and the Netherlands found shelter within the walls of the orphanage.

In the winter of 1818, a German ship arrived in New Orleans with over five hundred redemptioners, bringing public attention to the FOS and the plight of immigrant children in the port city. Ship agents in Holland absconded with the German immigrants’ passage money, forcing the Danish government to search for a captain who would transport the people to the United States. While in route to New Orleans, 597 of the 1,100 immigrants died in route when an outbreak of the bubonic plague spread. The remaining adults were sold as bond-servants at the

French Market for payment of their passage, while the orphaned children became some of the earliest inhabitants of the FOS.⁴⁰

The German ship became “stricken with pestilence [from] the sea” before it arrived in New Orleans in the winter of 1818. On many European voyages, dysentery, small pox, pestilence, and tuberculosis ran rampant below the ship decks. As colonial historian Billy G. Smith has observed, “German redemptioners, indentured servants, and poor immigrants...frequently experienced appalling voyages across the Atlantic at times equaling even the horrors of the African middle passage.”⁴¹ The numerous children orphaned by the time of their arrival surely faced similar experiences because the “miserable and destitute condition of seven girls on board,” spurred the managers of the FOS to receive them and pay \$160 for two of the children’s indentured contracts.⁴²

Germans represented the second largest group of immigrants to the United States in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.⁴³ Of those who came to New Orleans in the early nineteenth century, many were “redemptioners” who had bound themselves out for several years’ service to pay for their passage. Upon arrival, captains detained the redemptioners on board until prospective masters agreed to accept the terms of the ship owner. Contracts usually lasted three to eight years, depending on amount of debt and the value of the redemptioner’s labor. The *Louisiana Gazette* issued an advertisement informing “the inhabitants of Louisiana, who may want servants of different ages and sexes, labourers, farmers, gardners, mechanics,” to apply on board, or at the store of Mr. F. W. Am Ende, Toulouse St.”⁴⁴ Reports surfaced that “according to the unanimous statement of the survivors, most of the victims had literally been starved and not on account of lack of provisions, but as a result of the greed and atrocity of the captains.”⁴⁵

The destitute condition of the Germans aroused great sentiment among the people of New Orleans and across the country. The *Niles Registry*, a national paper published in Baltimore, wrote that the hundreds of Germans who arrived in New Orleans had “been wretchedly treated,” and “their case considerably excited the feelings of the citizens of that [city.]”⁴⁶ In New Orleans, the *Gazette* reported that it was “always gratifying to see public sympathy enlisted on the side of humanity.” The FOS joined the public outcry criticizing the condition of the German redemptioners. On recommendation from W. Cornelius, pastor of the First Presbyterian Church of New Orleans, the FOS accepted seven of the girls orphaned on their passage. The managers transferred three sisters to a young gentleman who reimbursed the society for freeing the girls from their servitude, while two others were placed out to future board members Mrs. Hunter and Mrs. Laidlaw.⁴⁷ Other children were not as fortunate. Sally Miller, a free white German girl whose parents died on the ship, found herself sold into indentured servitude and over the period of two decades Sally’s “status as a redemptioner had developed into actual enslavement.”⁴⁸

While Sally Miller’s case was an extreme, the redemption system in Louisiana and particularly the servitude of Germans in the early nineteenth century, emerged as a common thought throughout the port city. In December 1817, for example, New Orleans citizen David McClellan sent a letter to Shepard Brown to urge him to join in a scheme to bring over close to 1,000 German indentures to Louisiana. “The more I have reflected,” Brown states, “on the subject of bringing German immigrants to New Orleans, to work for their passage after their arrival, the more I am convinced of the profits to be received.”⁴⁹ Although the two men never succeeded in achieving McClellan’s plot, both believed once the Germans became “immuned to the climate” and put into practice “their industrious habits, superior intelligence and sobriety..., [they] would be better and do some more work, than the same number of Negros.”⁵⁰

The FOS did not conspire like McClellan or Shepard to bring over immigrants to New Orleans but did participate in the local indenture and slave markets. On March 7, 1818, in the same board meeting in which all members “unanimously agreed to receive the unfortunate children” from the Dutch vessel, the society resolved “to purchase the time of two redemptioners, a gardener and his wife.”⁵¹ Though in all likelihood the redemptioners came from the same ships the orphan children did, it is impossible to verify. In the *Second Annual Report of the Treasury 1818*, \$420.50 was paid out to buy the contracts of a German family and two orphans who arrived on the ships. Within the Poydras Asylum, redemptioners worked throughout the property tending the garden, chopping wood, and maintaining the grounds.

In the process of hiring out and buying slaves, the FOS entered into a world largely unfamiliar to them. As the wives of slave-holding white men, the women often directed slaves within the household but seldom participated actively in the slave market.⁵² Through securing an act of incorporation, the FOS managers exercised their right to buy and hire slaves outside of the control of their husbands. From March 1817 to July 1821, for example, the orphanage hired out a slave for ten dollars a month.⁵³ Because white women could not enter the slave pens, they often chose to hire out slaves because business could be achieved through correspondence and on their own terms. The practice of hiring slaves forced men, in some regard, to recognize the influence of such women who participated in the slave market. The market required exchanges of money, credit, and property, a world form which women had traditionally been excluded because of their supposed lack of intellectual or physical capabilities.

The FOS did, however, actively pursue purchasing slaves, elevating their interaction within the social and economic forces that shaped the city. In October 1825, the board appointed Mrs. Hunter and Mrs. Dulplessis to determine a “fair price for James, the Negro hired in the

garden being for sale at auction in a few days.”⁵⁴ The women stated they would go as high as \$125 for the purchase but “he sold upwards of \$200 [and] therefore he was not purchased by the Poydras Home.”⁵⁵ In 1832, the asylum purchased their first slave, Rachel, for \$200 and directed Mrs. Hunter to ask a man going to Norfolk, Virginia, “to inquire upon what terms a good male and female servant could be purchased for the Asylum.”⁵⁶ On one occasion, the Mayor sent “6 Negroes for five days to labor in the grounds” while another man added the services of three more slaves.⁵⁷

The FOS became increasingly involved in the New Orleans market for slaves and indentured servants. Board members drew up contracts on their own terms and had complete autonomy when deciding which slaves to hire, for how long, and for what price the institution deemed worthy. The FOS took full advantage of the rights allowed through incorporation. In an New Orleans economy that revolved around enslaved and indentured labor, problems often arose regarding the availability of workers, the nature of their skill, and the fluctuations in prices; all of which the FOS experienced. “Because of the great difficulty of procuring labourers on advantageous terms,” the FOS noted that the market forced them “reduce the plan of cultivation to a sufficiency of vegetables,” not the usual surplus sold in the local produce markets.⁵⁸ Regarding one particular laborer, the FOS found him “not qualified...and according to the agreement drawn up..., [gave] him notice to quit the premises in one month.”⁵⁹

As wives and daughters of prosperous merchants, lawyers, and politicians, the FOS managers were well aware of the advantages incorporation allowed them. Incorporation provided “concrete meaning to the influence” the society exhibited within the city.⁶⁰ The FOS actively pursued their familial connections with politicians on the city council. The relationship between the mayor’s office and the Poydras Asylum transformed into direct access to public

funds and political support. From 1817 to 1821, the mayor's office and state of Louisiana provided \$5,000 to the FOS.⁶¹ In October 1824, the visiting committee from the mayor's office reported on the "radiant health painted on the faces of the young girls."⁶² For a city challenged by epidemics each year, increasing immigration, and inadequate public services for the poor, the FOS filled a niche in the New Orleans environment. For the founders, the FOS became an avenue where middle- to upper-class white women could enter the public sphere and if only, temporarily, shed their status as home-bound wives. Incorporation granted collective privileges to the board members, who otherwise would not have had the opportunity to engage in political, social, and economic relationships that fostered the growth of the asylum.

II. Importance of the Female Orphan Society for Indigent Families

Various theories have been put forth to explain the increase of institutions specifically geared toward housing children in the nineteenth century. Prior to the American Revolution, almshouses served as the primary means for housing indigent and orphaned children. Adults, vagabonds, criminals, and children co-existed in public institutions that bred both disease and immoral activity. Labeled as living tombs and social cemeteries, these almshouses attracted the attention of critics who advocated for new policies concerning child welfare. State legislatures began looking for alternatives to the poorly funded and overly crowded almshouses. Relief came in the form of private charity through organizations like the New York Ladies Society (1797), New York Society for the Relief of Poor Widows and Small Children (1801), Orphan Asylum in the City of New York (1806), and Boston Female Asylum (1800).

Some historians have argued that nineteenth century asylums existed as a means to control and rehabilitate the lower classes of society. The institutions' purposes were two-fold: rehabilitate poor, urban children, and upon release, demonstrate the success the asylum achieved during the "rehabilitation process." As a result, public and private orphanages emerged as an avenue for social control where state and city officials attempted to intervene in family life. David Rothman expounds on the social control theory and argues that through discipline, orderly routine, and separation from the dregs of society, children might have the opportunity to resist the temptations of city life. Through moral persuasion and discipline, the institutions would, in theory, "transform" the moral fiber of the children in accordance with the values of white, Protestant middle-class society.

Both the theory of benevolent rescue and of social control can be seen to place great significance on the institutions themselves, ignoring the very people who lived within the walls. For both, creating a controlled atmosphere was the primary function. And only within such walls, away from open society, could the so-called rehabilitation occur because the urban poor always succumbed to temptation and vice within their own environments. In New Orleans, though, officials rarely encroached on the lives of poor families. Instead, elected public officials relied on providing help to the indigent population through financially supporting such institutions as the Poydras Asylum. The latter emerged as an institution that served many purposes for the city and the inmates. In the absence of state-administered programs, the Poydras Home served as the only private Protestant institution available that admitted indigent and orphaned girls. For poor families in need of temporary shelter, the Poydras Asylum became a place where daughters and orphaned children acquired skills and education comparable to middle-class families. An investigation into the girls admitted into the Poydras Asylum from

1817-1833 provides insight into how the families, particularly immigrant families, used the home for their survival, education of their daughters, and future skill learning.

From February 1817 to October 1824, the Poydras Home admitted 178 girls. Out of 178 girls admitted, the average age was about 7.80 years. The Poydras Home accepted three different categories of children: orphans, girls with single a parent, and in rare cases, children where both parents were still alive. Sixty-four children made up the records of single parents, 39 were orphans, 7 children had a mother and father, 9 were abandoned, while 59 entries failed to provide any information on the status of the child.⁶³

The FOS admitted sixty-four girls that either had a father or mother still living. Omitting two girls who stayed for over 5.5 years, these children waited on average about five months (158.03 days) before being reclaimed by a mother, father, aunt, or uncle. Such a short stay reveals the reason these girls were taken to the orphanage: temporary shelter and not the abrogation of parental responsibility. Four more were claimed by friends, 4 were adopted, and 1 brother claimed his younger sister. Out of the sixty-four girls admitted with at least one parent, 67% were claimed by a family member or adopted within the short five months they lived in the asylum. The high retrieval rate by single parents indicates that single mothers or fathers utilized the home in times of distress or need and not as venue to control or save indigent children.⁶⁴

The length of stay in the asylum for all girls demonstrates families employed the home for their own reasons. 47% of the girls admitted between Feb 1817-Oct 1824 stayed less than three months before being reclaimed or indentured to families. 67% of the girls admitted spent less than one year within the orphanage walls, while only eight girls stayed for over five years.

To create a unified home and instill in the inhabitants the virtues of education, religion, and industry, the FOS enforced a strict daily regiment. All of the girls were up, washed, and

required to have their hair combed by sunrise. The inhabitants then performed their allotted duties before breakfast; a half hour before breakfast was served, the girls read or were read to a portion of scripture. At “nine in the morning, the children except such as are necessarily employed about the domestic concern, shall be assembled in the school-room,” where the Governess instructed them in reading, spelling, writing, and arithmetic. At one, they had dinner and from two to five, were taught “various kinds of work.” The orphanage allowed a few hours for play, “subject at all times to the restriction of the Governess.” The day closed in the same manner as opened: with a reading of Scripture and prayer. And “all the family, except the governess, must be in bed at half after nine o’clock.”⁶⁵ The FOS strictly enforced the schedule throughout the week, except on Sundays, where the Governess led the children to their appropriate Protestant or Catholic churches in the morning and provided religious instruction in the evening. The board of the FOS relied on the Governess to enforce the rules. They also stated their unwavering support of her capabilities, “[trusting] the seeds of religion and virtue will take root, spring up, and bring forth fruit, ‘some sixty, some seventy, and some one hundred full.’”⁶⁶

In a report from January 29, 1825, the managers discuss the large number of Catholic girls in the asylum. The institution had at first projected that Protestants would make up the majority at the asylum, but the opposite proved to be the case. Because of the “immediate and constant support from Catholic subscribers and so many Catholic are children present in the Asylum, the managers have deemed it both necessary and proper... to instruct the children in the duties of that religion.”⁶⁷ The FOS adapted to the increase of Catholic girls by hiring a manager to instruct the students, indicating an acknowledgment to change its policies to afford instruction in both religions. The Poydras Home also applied to the Catholic Church of New Orleans “to

accommodate them with seats to which request [was] most complied with.”⁶⁸ Because of the great difficulty in procuring suitable managers to work in the Poydras Home, two nuns from the Sisters of Charity were “entrusted with the education and morality” of the inmates in January 1831. In May of 1831 the FOS requested three more nuns from the Sisters of Charity work at the home.⁶⁹ And by the end of 1831, the FOS found the services of the nuns “so valuable to the institution,” that the board placed the children “more immediately under” their care.⁷⁰ From October 1826 to January 1833, the FOS accepted 256 girls. Family members claimed 42% of the girls, while the FOS placed 16% of the girls out to families (Table 3). Records fail to indicate the status of 24% of the girls admitted within the home during this time but numbers do demonstrate that FOS made every effort to meet the needs of the children. Though the Sisters of Charity ran the FOS for some years, children were still allowed to visit their appropriate place of worship in the city.

Characteristics of Girls Admitted in Poydras Asylum 1817-1833 (Table 3)

Child's Status	Total Admitted	Placed Out	Claimed	Death	Run Away	Disease *	Adopted	Other ^
At Least One Parent	147, (34%)	18	93	10	1	7	9	10
Orphan	97, (22%)	32	17	19	2	3	4	18
Abandoned	12, (3%)	3	1	1	2	0	0	5
Mother and Father	15, (3%)	1	7	0	0	0	0	7
No Mention	165 (38%)	35	37	15	0	6	0	60
Total	436	89, (20%)	155, (35.5%)	45, (10%)	5, (1%)	16, (3.5%)	13, (2.5%)	118, (27%)

*Girls who acquired a contagious disease in the asylum, such as cholera, were forced to leave.

^ Register fails to reveal what happened to admitted.

III. The Role of Children at the FOS in the Development of the New Orleans Economy

Although the article of incorporation granted protection and legal rights for the FOS, the legislation failed to provide legal security for the children in the institution. Through experience, the FOS changed previous policies and adapted new regulations concerning the governance of the institution, many of which aimed to benefit the children. From their founding, the FOS was dedicated to producing “useful members of society.” Over time, placing the inmates out to families in order to learn manufacturing or industry emerged as regular practice. Between 1817 and 1833, 20% of the girls that passed through the home were indentured to families (Table 4). Placing children out to families was beneficial to all the parties involved. Most important, it provided a future skill for girls of the Asylum. For the families who applied for an indenture contract, the child represented additional labor that helped maintain the household. For the city, children’s labor emerged as integral factor in the development of the growing urban economy.

An experience early in the home’s existence forced the FOS to take action regarding the association’s control of the inmates. Following a board meeting on March 15, 1817, where a letter from Mayor MaCarthy authorized the superior directresses “to take charge of” a potential girl, a group of young ladies infuriated with the institution for housing one of their friends, forcibly entered the institution and removed her from the home. The FOS attempted to contact Mayor MaCarthy about the situation but he “declined all interference.”⁷¹ One particular woman refused to give her up after the incident and it was determined, that a board member would try one more time to peacefully retrieve her. On April 5, the board reported the peaceful application to regain the child was rejected, and therefore “resolved that all legal measures shall be taken to obtain [her] from her profligate guardian.” In the same meeting, the FOS passed a resolution

Characteristics of Girls Admitted in Poydras Asylum 1826-1833 (Table 4)

Child's Status	Total Admitted	Placed Out	Claimed	Death	Run Away	Disease *	Adopted	Other ^
At Least One Parent	83, (32%)	6	51	8	0	7	1	11
Orphan	58, (23%)	12	17	13	2	3	4	10
Abandoned	3, (1%)	2	0	0	1	0	0	0
Mother and Father	8, (3%)	0	4	0	0	0	0	4
No Mention	104 (41%)	20	36	6	0	6	0	36
Total	436	89, (20%)	155, (35.5%)	45, (10%)	5, (1%)	16, (3.5%)	13, (2.5%)	118, (27%)

*Girls who acquired a contagious disease in the asylum, such as cholera, were forced to leave.

^ Register fails to reveal what happened to admitted.

“from experience,” where it appeared necessary that the society should have some legal hold on the objects of the institution; “therefore decided that in every case, where it is practicable, the children shall be bound to them for a term.”⁷²

Two years later, the state of Louisiana provided further legal protection to the institution. The legislature passed a law requiring complete “consent and approbation” from the directors when families members requested the return of their children.⁷³ With legal hold on the children, the institution started searching for other avenues to gain profit and expand its influence in the city-soon directing the Governess to “receive such work as may offer” within the institution and the city.⁷⁴ In May 1817, the FOS decided the girls “should take such sewing as is offered at the lowest rates...for their own advantage.”⁷⁵ The proceeds, however, went straight to the treasurer.

From its inception, the FOS worked to prepare the inmates in becoming “beneficial members of society.” In November 1819, the society started implementing rewards for the best-made shirts, curtain sheets, and table cloths; prizes included money, as well as gloves for those girls coming in first and second place.⁷⁶ By establishing rewards to increase industrial production, the FOS attempted to gain both profit and control regarding the indigent orphans. Gleaning profits from the children’s work permitted more freedom in administrative decisions. By enforcing a strict daily schedule and promising monetary value for quality products, allowed the FOS was able to shape both the mentality and future direction of the asylum’s inhabitants. Gaining direct control within the home, the society moved towards policies that would extend their influence outside the walls of the orphanage.

After its first year in existence, the FOS began apprenticing a significant number of children to families throughout the city. From February 18, 1817 to January 1833, the institution

placed out 89 children to families. According to the Poydras Home register, girls were placed out to “learn the manufacturing business.” Out of all the girls that were placed out and listed with an age, 11.8 years was the average age when they were given to families. For example, on July 4, 1827, a woman made an application to hire out six girls. The applicant stated she wanted six girls to remain for three years “during which time she [would] instruct them in the mantua-making or millinery trades.” The managers accepted “with eagerness,” granting the woman four of the girls.⁷⁷ A month later, however, the women returned three girls providing no explanation. One particular girl from November 1819 to September 1823 spent time in seven different families while another nine-year-old moved among four families in less than one year.

In many instances, the institution enforced its right as legal guardian of the asylum’s inhabitants. “Persons calling themselves relatives of two orphan,” applied for permission to take the children, but the “board thinking the situation [an] improper one refused their consent.”⁷⁸ Historian Karen Zipf argues that during the antebellum courts in North Carolina displayed little concern, if any, in matters of child welfare.⁷⁹ In New Orleans, the state officials rarely interfered in custody matters with the FOS. On many occasions, a visiting committee of the legislature “expressed themselves much pleased with the managers.”⁸⁰ In March 1820, the Louisiana legislature deemed the FOS “worthy of its special protection, on account of its public utility and proper mode of government.”⁸¹

Due to the increased demand of people “applying for children to be bound to them,” the institution adapted some regulations “for the advantage of those children when they may be freed from their term of service.” The board resolved that on the children’s eighteenth birthday, they should become employed in trade or receives fifty dollars from their master.⁸² The society adopted the resolution on November 5, 1819, after which seven children had already been placed

out. According to historian Peter Bardaglio, southern appellate jurists before 1860 “demonstrated a growing sensitivity to the welfare of the child in formal transfers of parental custody through indentures.”⁸³ Bardaglio implies that although the courts believed in apprenticeship, they began undertaking a new paternalistic interest in regulating the placing out process, which he argues was out of concern for the child. The FOS had complete discretion over which girls would be placed out and who would receive them. Granted legal guardianship, the association administered their right not only for the sake of the children, but also for the regulation of the institution.

After their first year in existence, the FOS started apprenticing a significant number of children to families throughout the city. Of the 64 children with a single parent, only 13 were placed out, with five children returning to a family member following their servitude. The FOS entered into a contract with a potential applicant asking to indenture a young girl. Placing a child out would negate any chances for a family member to regain their daughter before the terms of service ended, demonstrating that single mothers or father made an effort to use the orphanage only temporarily and restrict the placing of their child.⁸⁴

In addition to the children with at least one parent, the FOS admitted 39 orphans in the 6.5 years between 1817- 1824. Nineteen were placed out to families and four died within a few days of being admitted. Omitting two girls who stayed for 2.5 years before being placed out, 17 orphan girls waited only about 1.97 months before the institution placed them out. Further research shows that board members decided against placing out children admitted in 1819 in order for the children to receive the “full care and direction of Mrs. Smith.”⁸⁵ Subtracting the nine orphans admitted during 1819 and the four who died, 19 out of the 27 orphans were placed out within two months; about 70% of the orphan girls in a little over six years.⁸⁶ The high

percentage of orphans being placed out shows that the FOS did not attempt to control the indigent population, but rather provided the children with the greatest opportunities for work and future employment. Placing children out to manufacturers provided the opportunities for young girls to learn and practice a skilled trade like hat or clothing manufacturing.⁸⁷

Matching up inmates with families that practiced the same religion further demonstrates that the FOS sought to create the best experience possible for the children. In February 1825, the board passed a resolution stating that “as far as possible the Catholic children are to be placed in Catholic families and the Protestants in Protestant families.”⁸⁸ Months later a group of Catholic women applied for a particular girl, but because “no Protestant girl spoke French- the managers stated the objectives of the Catholic managers...and declined giving the child.” The child, however, was later allowed to be placed out with the women because she was a ward of the state.⁸⁹

Conclusion

The FOS emerged in response to a city that failed to meet the educational and daily needs of the growing immigrant population. Admitted into the union in 1803, Louisiana continued to adhere to some of the Creole customs that limited the social welfare policies of New Orleans. As Anglo Americans from the North continuously moved to the port city in large numbers, many of the previous customs and practices were soon replaced by a more “Americanized” form of governance. Noted Louisiana historian Joseph Tregle states that after 1803, the history of New Orleans “centered largely in vigorous battles among Latin Creoles, Americans, and foreign French for control of the society.”⁹⁰ Within this context, the FOS emerged as an integral part of

New Orleans society that filled a void left by the insufficient social welfare policies of the local Creole population.

Some historians have argued that the upper-class women of the South resembled their counterparts in the North. Others have stated that southern women are truly unique and the majority of their experiences were vastly different from northern women's. The founders of the FOS, however, blended customs and practices from both regions. The northern founders carried to New Orleans notions of charity, benevolence, and the cult of domesticity taking root in cities like Boston, New York, and Philadelphia. By securing an act of incorporation, the FOS gained public powers that the majority of southern women had not yet imagined. Recognizing the urgent need for an orphanage in New Orleans society, the founders instantly adapted to the practices of their new environment. Through the use of slaves, German redemptioners, and indentured servants, the FOS participated in local society. Because the founders skillfully blended practices of northern and southern sentiments, the FOS increased in reputation, size, and importance. Through their work, the FOS directly influenced the "Americanization" of the city and provided a model for benevolent associations of the future.

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Appendix

Child's Reason for Leaving (Table 1)	
Reason	Totals (179 admitted)
Claimed *	48, (27%)
Indentured	49, (27%)
Adopted	5, (3%)
Death	9, (5%)
Unknown ^	68, (38%)

*Child is claimed by a parent, relative, or friend

^ Child is only noted as having entered the asylum

Amount of Time Spent in Poydras Home Before Claimed by a Family Member, 1817-1824 (Table 2)	
Length of Stay	34 Total (entries that have specific accepted and withdrawal dates)
0-3 months	16, (47%)
3-6 months	3, (8.5%)
6-12 months	4, (11.55)
1-3 years	3, (8.5%)
3-5 years	0
Over 5 years	8, (23.5%)

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- ¹ Female Orphan Society Board Meeting Minutes, June 5 1819, Poydras Home Collection #69, Vol 67, Jones Hall, Tulane University Special Collections, New Orleans, LA, (hereafter cited as Minutes, Poydras Home).
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- ⁵ Ibid., Article 4.
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- ¹⁰ Robert Quarle, *Louisiana Gazette and Mercantile Advertiser*, June 3, 1815.
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- ¹³ Ibid., 222.
- ¹⁴ *First Annual Report January 16, 1818*, Minutes, Poydras Home.
- ¹⁵ an Orleanist, *Louisiana Gazette and Mercantile Advertiser*, August 19, 1815.
- ¹⁶ Ibid., Feb 15, 1817.
- ¹⁷ Louisiana House of Representatives and Senate, Session Laws, sec 1, Article of Incorporation, Feb 22, 1817.
- ¹⁸ Anne M. Boylan, “Women and Politics in the Era before Seneca Falls,” *Journal of the Early Republic*. Vol. 10, No. 3 (Autumn, 1990), 365.
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- ²¹ Nathalie Dessens, *From Saint Domingue to New Orleans: Migration and Influences* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 2007), 27.
- ²² Ibid., 45.
- ²³ Joseph G. Tregle Jr, “Early New Orleans Society: A Reappraisal,” *The Journal of Southern History* Vol 18, No. 1 (Feb 1952), 25.
- ²⁴ “Early New Orleans Society,” 30.
- ²⁵ Peter J. Kastor, *The Nations Crucible: The Louisiana Purchase and the Creation of America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 184-188, 210.
- ²⁶ Dr. George Hunter discovered salt in Louisiana while serving under President Thomas Jefferson’s appointed 1803 committee to explore the territory. Dr. Hunter, along with his brother-in-law Thomas Bryant, established Hunter and Bryant’s Steam Saw and Grist Mill in July of 1815. Alfred Hennen was an attorney who served as President of the Louisiana Bible Society and the Bethel Union Society. Along with Dr. Hunter, Hennen served on the board of the First Presbyterian Church in New Orleans; Hunter served as President and Hennen as secretary. Thomas Bryant and Nathan Morse served on the city council during Augustin de McCarthy’s tenure from 1815-1820. Nathan Morse also served as head of the visiting committee to the FOS each year.
- ²⁷ Christine Stansell, *City of Women: Sex and Class in New York* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1986), 20-21.
- ²⁸ Ibid., 42.
- ²⁹ Ibid., 34.
- ³⁰ Mary Ann Hunter to cousin Eliza, July 30 1815, MS 19, Tulane Special Collections, New Orleans, Louisiana.
- ³¹ Robert Quarle, June 3, 1815.

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- ³² “Early New Orleans Society,” 26.
- ³³ Anne M Boylan, “Women in Groups: An Analysis of Women’s Benevolent Organizations in New York and Boston, 1797-1840,” *The Journal of American History* Vol 71, No. 3 (Dec, 1984), 497.
- ³⁴ Anne Firor Scott, *Natural Allies: Women’s Associations in American History* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993), 24-25.
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- ³⁷ Ibid.,
- ³⁸ *Third Annual Report January 17, 1820*, Minutes, Poydras Home.
- ³⁹ *Eight Annual Report, Jan 29, 1825*, Minutes, Poydras Home.
- ⁴⁰ Dalores Egger Labbe, *Women in Early 19th Century LA* (Dover: University of Delaware Press, PhD diss., 1975), 5.
- ⁴¹ Billy G Smith, “Death and Life in a Colonial City: A Demographic Analysis of Philadelphia,” *Journal of Economic History* 37, no. 4 (December, 1977): 872.
- ⁴² March 7, 1818, Minutes, Poydras Home.
- ⁴³ Farley W. Grubb, “German Immigration to Pennsylvania, 1709-1820,” *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 20 (winter 1990): 417.
- ⁴⁴ *Louisiana Gazette*, March 5, 1818.
- ⁴⁵ J. Hanno Deiler, “The System of Redemption in the State of Louisiana,” translated by Louis Voss. *Louisiana Historical Quarterly* 12 (1929): 425-427.
- ⁴⁶ *Niles Registry*, April 11, 1818.
- ⁴⁷ March 7 and April 5 1817, Minutes, Poydras Home.
- ⁴⁸ Carol Wilson, *The Two Lives of Sally Miller: A Case of Mistaken Racial Identity in Antebellum New Orleans* (New Brunswick: University of Rutgers Press, 2007), 45.
- ⁴⁹ David McClellan to Shepard Brown, December 22, 1817. John McDonogh Papers, Box 6, Folder 17. Jones Hall, Tulane University Special Collections.
- ⁵⁰ Ibid.,
- ⁵¹ March 7, 1817, Minutes, Poydras Home.
- ⁵² Walter Johnson, in *Soul by Soul*, states that women in New Orleans indirectly participated in the slave market through three avenues. Before marriage, women could receive permission from her husband to have control over the property she possessed. A woman could also gain rights separate from her husband during marriage that enabled her to buy slaves. Because the FOS received legal recognition as a corporation within Louisiana, board members attained the right to hire and buy slaves outside the control of their husbands. Women, however, were never allowed to go to the slave markets and purchase slaves. Walter Johnson, *Soul by Soul: Life Inside the Antebellum Slave Market* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999), 89.
- ⁵³ Financial Papers, Box 1, Folders 1-5, Poydras Home Collection.
- ⁵⁴ October 5, 1825, Minutes, Poydras Home.
- ⁵⁵ October 12, 1825, Minutes, Poydras Home.
- ⁵⁶ No date, sometime between May 1, 1832 and June 4, 1832, Minutes, Poydras Home.
- ⁵⁷ October 10, 1827, Minutes, Poydras Home.
- ⁵⁸ January 16, 1823, Minutes, Poydras Home.
- ⁵⁹ September 1821, Minutes, Poydras Home.
- ⁶⁰ Lori D. Ginzberg, *Women and the Work of Benevolence: Morality, Politics, and Class in the Nineteenth-Century United States* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), 48.
- ⁶¹ Annual Report of the Treasury, Minutes, Poydras Home.
- ⁶² Visiting Report from the Mayor, October 1824, Minutes, Poydras Home.
- ⁶³ 74 girls out of the 179 admitted from Feb 22, 1817-October 15, 1824 are indicated in the register with an age. Register of the Poydras Asylum 1817-1844, pages 1-49. Vol 1. Poydras Home.
- ⁶⁴ Ibid.,
- ⁶⁵ Rules and Regulations, Feb 24 1817, Minutes, Poydras Home.
- ⁶⁶ Constitution of the Female Orphan Society, February 22, 1817, Minutes, Poydras Home.
- ⁶⁷ *Eighth Annual Report Jan 29, 1825*, Minutes, Poydras Home.
- ⁶⁸ Ibid.,
- ⁶⁹ Jan 16, 1831, Minutes, Poydras Home.
- ⁷⁰ January 6, 1832, Minutes, Poydras Home.

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- ⁷¹ March 25, 1817, Minutes, Poydras Home.
- ⁷² April 5, 1817, Minutes, Poydras Home.
- ⁷³ Louisiana House of Representatives and Senate, Session Laws, March 6, 1819, Session Laws, Section 2.
- ⁷⁴ April 17, 1817, Minutes, Poydras Home.
- ⁷⁵ May 3, 1817, Minutes, Poydras Home.
- ⁷⁶ November 5, 1819, Minutes, Poydras Home.
- ⁷⁷ July 4, 1827, Minutes, Poydras Home.
- ⁷⁸ June 1821, Minutes, Poydras Home.
- ⁷⁹ Karen Zipf, *Labor of Innocents: Forced Apprenticeship in North Carolina 1715-1919* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2005), 39.
- ⁸⁰ Feb 1, 1823, Minutes, Poydras Home.
- ⁸¹ Louisiana House of Representatives and Senate, Session Laws, March 16, 1820, sec 1.
- ⁸² November 5, 1819, Minutes, Poydras Home.
- ⁸³ Peter Bardaglio, *Reconstructing the Household: Families, Sex, the Law in the Nineteenth Century South* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1995), 103.
- ⁸⁴ Ibid.
- ⁸⁵ February 6, 1819, Minutes, Poydras Home. The board was delighted at the “progression” the children were making under the care of Mrs. Smith and decided against placing any children out.
- ⁸⁶ Register of the Poydras Asylum 1817-1844, pages 1-49. Vol 1, Poydras Home.
- ⁸⁷ The apprentice system secured shelter, support, and training to indigent white children throughout the South. For free children of color following the Civil War, planters attempted to maintain control of their labor through replacing slavery with apprenticeship. As the boundaries changed between whites and blacks, the apprentice system sparked heated debate because the controversy centered on the market and household, two places which held vast importance for both races. Planters continuously sought to exert their control through ambiguous contracts, while freed blacks attempted to keep their own farm hands in the family by apprenticing their children to family members on neighboring plantations. Mary Niall Mitchell, *Raising Freedom's Child: Black Children and Visions of the Future After Slavery* (New York: New York University Press), 147-148.
- ⁸⁸ February 17, 1825, Minutes, Poydras Home.
- ⁸⁹ June 2, 1825, Minutes, Poydras Home. One of the only occurrences when the Mayor of New Orleans directly interfered with a decision by the FOS. A week later the girl was returned with permission from the board.
- ⁹⁰ Joseph Tregle Jr., “Creoles and Americans,” in *Creole New Orleans: Race and Americanization*, ed. Arnold R. Hirsch, Joseph Logsdon (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1992), 141.

Vita

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